

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A16.

WASHINGTON POST
21 November 1985

Events Spark Speculation That Spy Swap Is Imminent

U.S. Trial Put Off; 2 Plead Guilty in Ghana

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Guilty pleas in Ghana by two men accused of spying for the CIA and a closed hearing Monday in Alexandria for a Ghanaian facing espionage charges here have led to speculation that an exchange of spy suspects may be imminent.

Two Ghana citizens, arrested last month on spy charges, switched their pleas to guilty in Accra on Tuesday, one day after a federal judge in Alexandria postponed, without explanation, the trial date for Michael A. Soussoudis, a Ghanaian accused of illegally obtaining classified CIA information.

Soussoudis' lawyer, Plato Cacheris, said yesterday he hoped his client's case would be resolved by next week—two weeks before a new trial date of Dec. 9. Cacheris declined to elaborate, citing a gag order imposed on lawyers in the

case by District Judge Claude A. Hilton.

A Ghanaian diplomat in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, told Washington Post special correspondent Howard French yesterday that "Your suspicions are correct" when asked about the possibility of a spy suspect swap, but later refused to confirm that such an exchange might take place there.

Felix Peasah, 59, a security officer at the U.S. Embassy in Accra, was sentenced yesterday to life imprisonment, Reuters reported. The second defendant, Theodore Atiedu, 39, a police inspector with Ghana's Bureau of National Investigation, received a 25-year prison term.

Both men originally pleaded innocent to charges they had spied for the CIA, but entered guilty pleas on Tuesday after a four-week recess in the case.

Monday's court hearing in Vir-

ginia was closed under the Classified Information Procedures Act, a law allowing for examination of what U.S. government secrets, if any, might become public at a trial. Federal judges are empowered to rule on the admissibility of such evidence.

The hearing was attended by Eric Otoo, Ghana's ambassador here, a rare move in a proceeding designed to deal with U.S. security concerns. Otoo declined comment.

Soussoudis, 39, was arrested by the FBI in July at a motel in Springfield where he had been lured to a meeting with his American girlfriend, Sharon M. Scranage. Scranage, 29, a former CIA clerk at the U.S. Embassy in Ghana, has pleaded guilty to sharing CIA secrets, including the identities of informants, with Soussoudis.

Scranage, who is awaiting sentencing, agreed to testify against Soussoudis as part of her plea agreement. She pleaded guilty to one count of revealing classified information and two counts of disclosing the names of persons working with the CIA.

U.S. prosecutors have alleged that Soussoudis, a cousin of Lt. Jerry Rawlings, Ghana's military leader, is a Ghanaian intelligence agent, a charge Soussoudis denies.